

Introduction

Jawaharlal Nehru is a prominent face in the India's freedom struggle. He was born on November 14, 1889 in a wealthy Brahmin family in Allahabad. Nehru imbibed patriotism and love for nation from his father Motilal Nehru who himself was a known and influential politician who also served once as a president of the Indian National Congress. Jawaharlal Nehru was well educated and a scholar. His charm, spiritual discovery, and vision significantly contributed to the Indian independence movement. He was appointed the first Prime Minister of Free India who took the complete responsibility of building the nation. Being the member of the Congress party he has done many monumental work and is also known to be steer the newly freed-nation. In the year 1916 Nehru actively participated in the Lucknow Session of the Congress where both the extremists and the moderate parties of the Congress agreed to the need and demand of 'self-rule' or 'swaraj'. Later on, after many movements and sessions, Motilal Nehru launched the 'Swaraj Party' in the year 1922. Though Motilala moved from the Congress to the Swaraj party, Jawaharlal Nehru refused to leave the Congress party. In due course there Jawaharlal Nehru was also imprisoned for his active participation in the civil disobedience campaign. During the time he was in jail Nehru was deeply touched by the beliefs of Gandhi that showed a completely new approach to deal with the system of caste differentiation and the social issue of un-touchability. In the year 1926, Nehru left for a European tour with his family. There he came across many different types of people including the socialists, communists, and even radical leaders. There he was impressed by the economic system that he wished to get it to his own country. After returning Nehru was appointed as the president of the Congress in 1930 with the only aim to subside the high intensity of communism in the Congress. After many socialist activities, violations, and civil movements, India was announced to be a free country. The British Empire was overthrown by the congress on August 15, 1947 after about 15 years of Guwahati session.

NEHRU'S VISION FOR A NEW INDIA

After this independence, Jawaharlal Nehru was appointed as the first Prime Minister of India. As the Prime Minister, Nehru has made many contributions to build a happy and better nation. One by one he tried to sort out all the social and political issues in the country. In the year 1949 he visited the United States in search of a perfect solution to the existing food shortage in the country. In the year 1951, he also launched the 'First Five-Year Plan' mainly to emphasize the agriculture output in the country. Working and contributing significantly to build the nation, Jawaharlal Nehru fought till his last breath. On 27 May 1964, he died but left his footprints on the niche of our motherland.

Quality of Life

Long before independence, the Congress Party had been deeply aware of the many problems that needed attention for improving the quality of life of ordinary Indians. Nehru in particular had a clear understanding of the challenges confronting the nation in its early years. As far back as 1936, in his presidential address to the Lucknow session, he had stated his views, outlining his policy for ensuring social justice and the welfare of the masses. Nehru was steadfast in pursuing the ideology of planning, and the National Planning Committee was set up in 1938, almost entirely on his initiative. In November 1947, the Congress set up an Economic Programme Committee under the chairmanship of Nehru to draw up an economic policy for the Congress. The report of this committee, submitted in January 1948, emphasised the importance of establishing a just social order to ensure the equitable distribution of income and wealth. It proposed the creation of a permanent Planning Commission, which was established on 15 March 1950, with Nehru as chairman. In the planning process, Nehru was ably assisted by Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, a Cambridge-trained physicist and statistician, the man who introduced modern statistics to India and who used data collection and analysis effectively for the planning process. The Avadi session in 1955 resolved that planning should take place with a view to the establishment of a socialistic pattern of society where the principal means of production are under social ownership or control, production is progressively speeded up and there is equitable distribution of the national wealth. Nehru maintained that planning was essential to the development needs of a poor country with scarce resources, which needed to be managed optimally and which could be ensured only through effective national planning.

Land Reforms

He also felt that India would continue to face unforeseen crises and calamities—invasions, droughts, floods—and hence the country must have the ability to respond to these situations in a planned and systematic manner. He also felt that state intervention in economic policy (what he called ‘the commanding heights of the economy’) was imperative for developing the country’s infrastructure and for ensuring that large projects were taken up so that the country could reap the benefits of the economies of scale. The state alone could mobilise the resources required for such ambitious projects. Nehru felt that ownership of key industries should not be allowed to fall into the hands of private individuals. Unequal access to land was a fundamental problem in rural India. Land reform legislation had long been on the agenda of the Congress. After independence, this issue was prioritised, and by 1949 different states had passed major legislation to abolish the zamindari system. This step at one stroke led to an economic and social revolution in rural India, empowering the rural peasantry. The state vested the right of ownership in tenants, doing away with age-old exploitation represented by the imposition of rents and cesses. It freed land for redistribution to the landless. Tenants and sharecroppers got occupancy rights and now paid reduced fixed rents. Nehru strongly backed the implementation of land reforms, believing them to be necessary because, as he said: We felt that this [was the] inner urge of our people because we heard the cry of millions of people and sometimes deep murmurs and rumblings which, if not listened to and if not answered, create big revolutions and changes in the country. He viewed land reforms not only in terms of social equity but also within the larger perspective of economic development. In a letter to chief ministers in 1954, he observed: The whole policy of land reforms apart from moving the burden of the actual tiller was to spread the income from the land more evenly among the peasantry and thus give them the purchasing power. In this way the internal market would expand and productive forces of the country would grow.

Community Development

The needs of peasants, most of whom lacked the material resources, education, and knowledge necessary to negotiate the major changes taking place in rural areas, also received attention. On 2 October 1952, under the First Five-Year Plan, a nationwide Community Development Programme (CDP) was launched that envisaged the village as a basic unit of development. The programme was especially aimed at improving the conditions of backward groups and backward

areas. Under this programme, community development schemes were launched focusing on improved road connectivity, cattle welfare, improved methods of cultivation, canal irrigation, and the introduction of scientific methods of agriculture. At the first CDP conference in 1952, Nehru expressed the hope that: These community centers will not merely pick out the best and most favorable spots and help them start but also try to work out the problems of the other spots which are backward, economically, socially, and in other respects.

Swadeshi

The economic policy of the Congress emphasized swadeshi or self-reliance, clearly recognising that underdevelopment was a result of a lack of technological progress. To remedy this, major initiatives to foster self-sufficiency were introduced. The Industrial Policy Resolution of 1948 stressed the role of the state in the development of industry. The New Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 emphasised the vital role of the state in planning, developing, and exercising overall control of resources. It committed the state to undertaking the expansion of the public sector, which would cover basic industries and public utility services. In pursuing a policy of a mixed economy, Nehru envisaged that while basic industries would remain under state control, other industries could continue to be privately managed. The country's modernisation depended crucially on planning, a mixed economy, and rapid industrialisation guided by the state.

Public Sector Undertakings

The New Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 classified new industries into three categories. The first was the exclusive responsibility of the state and included energy, power, iron, coal, steel, electricity, telephone, defence-related industries, and aviation. The second covered both public and private sector participation and included chemicals, fertilisers, pharmaceuticals, and road transport. The third was the private sector, which primarily covered consumer industries. Nehru identified the production of power and steel as essential for self-sufficiency and planning. India collaborated with other countries, and the result was the establishment of steel plants in Rourkela (Orissa) with German help, in Bhilai (Madhya Pradesh) with Russian help, and in Durgapur (West Bengal) with British help. The Indian steel industry symbolised India's ambition to forge ahead on a self-reliant, productive industrial path. Power generation was the other major area identified as crucial. Dam projects were under-taken on the Mahanadi, Rihand, Tungabhadra, Damodar, and Satluj rivers. The most prestigious of these was the Bhakra Nangal dam in Punjab,

the second highest in the world. Inaugurated in July 1954, it was a symbol of what Nehru called 'the temples of modern India'.

Conclusion

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is a remarkable figure in Indian history not just because of his modern vision but also for his versatile personality. Besides being a freedom fighter, leader, and politician. Working and contributing significantly to build the nation, Jawaharlal Nehru fought till his last breath. On 27 May 1964, he died but left his footprints on the niche of our motherland.